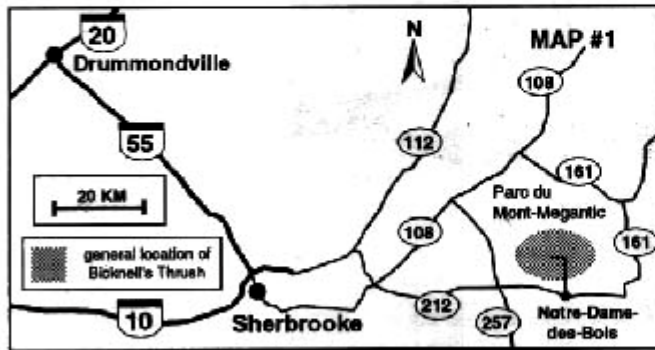


Bicknell's Thrush

Observation Sites in Quebec

by Henri Ouellet

There are several easily accessible locations where Bicknell's Thrush can be readily observed in Quebec, but some locations may be difficult to reach or are a long distance from major cities in Ontario and Quebec. With a good road map of Quebec and the following information, birders should not have trouble locating suitable places and birds at the right time during the nesting season.



Map by Michael King

Map 1. The easiest spot, particularly for those who do not have much time at their disposal, is undoubtedly Mont Mégantic, east of Sherbrooke in the Eastern Townships. This area, where an astronomical observatory is located, is part of a provincial park, Parc du Mont-Mégantic, and the summit can be reached on a paved road. Bicknell's Thrush can be heard and seen from the main road but one increases the chance of good sightings by using the numerous paths that lead away from the road, starting near the observatory. The best times of the day are very early mornings around sunrise, and evenings before sunset. There is much singing in early June on calm and foggy days, at all hours. This bird also sings occasionally at night, particularly when there is no wind. Mont Mégantic offers the added opportunity to hear and observe several species of the boreal forest such as Boreal Chickadee, Common Raven, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo and Gray Jay to name only a few.

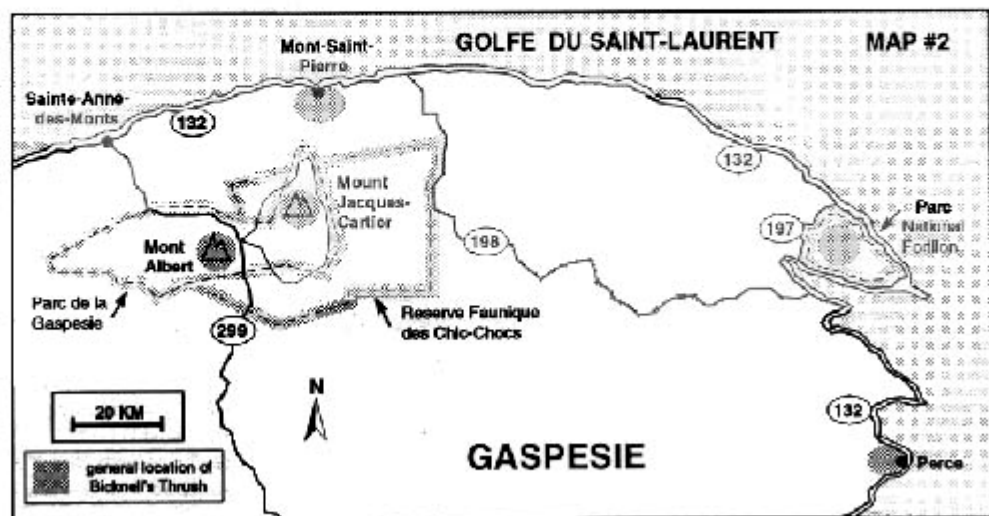
Early mornings and evenings, or calm foggy days in the first three weeks of June are best for hearing and seeing the bird.

Map by Michael King

Map 2. Another choice area for seeing Bicknell's Thrush is the Gaspé Peninsula. The small locality of Mont Saint-Pierre offers two possibilities. The first is the series of hills that surrounds the village, particularly those on the east side which are accessible by a gravel road that leads to a launching pad for paragliders. The upper part of the road goes through suitable habitats and supports a few pairs in the second growth stands that border it. Mont Saint-Pierre also leads to Mont Jacques-Cartier in the Chic-Chocs Faunal Reserve. It is located some 35 km south of the village and at the end of the gravel road one can use the parking lot from where several trails lead to Mont Jacques-Cartier. The areas of transition between coniferous stands and alpine tundra support stunted conifers, birches and willows. This is the traditional habitat of Bicknell's Thrush in that part of its range. Early mornings and evenings, or calm foggy days in the first three weeks of June are best for hearing and seeing the bird. The area of Mont Albert in Gaspésie Provincial Park, with its numerous trails leading to traditional habitats also offers excellent opportunities to see this thrush.

Map 2. Forillon National Park, particularly the higher portions, appear to support a small population of Bicknell's Thrush but I have not checked this part personally. During fall migration, from mid-August to mid-September, it has been reported in good numbers.

Map 2. The higher hills around Percé support a small population of Bicknell's Thrush and all the areas are easily accessible by car or on foot from the village or from the back



roads. Any of the roads leading to the mountains and hills behind and around Percé lead to Bicknell's Thrush habitat. As well, the path and stairs behind the church lead to a lookout (belvedere) where singing individuals have been observed in June. June would be the preferred time as singing diminishes rapidly and becomes infrequent afterwards. An additional bonus: the gannet and other seabird colonies of Bonaventure Island are close by.

Map 3. There are scattered populations of Bicknell's Thrush in the higher areas of Charlevoix County. I have observed it at locations north of Saint-Urbain, on Highway 381, in Parc des Grands-Jardins and in ZEC (Zone d'exploitation contrôlée) des Martres. The forest roads leading to second growth vegetation, particularly those located east of the highway, are worth exploring, especially at dawn.

Map 3. As well, it has been reported on the higher elevations of Parc Jacques-Cartier and in Réserve faunique des Laurentides using Highways 175 and 169 (Mont Apica). Sideroads are scarce along the highways, but those sideroads going to higher elevations where you can use a car should be productive in June. The road leading to Mont Apica has given good results.

Mont Sir-Wilfrid (46°41'-75°36'), in Labelle County, in the general area of Mont-Laurier, supports a very small population and is difficult to access on an arduous and unpredictable gravel road. It does not offer good chances of observing it in spite of its location close to Ottawa.

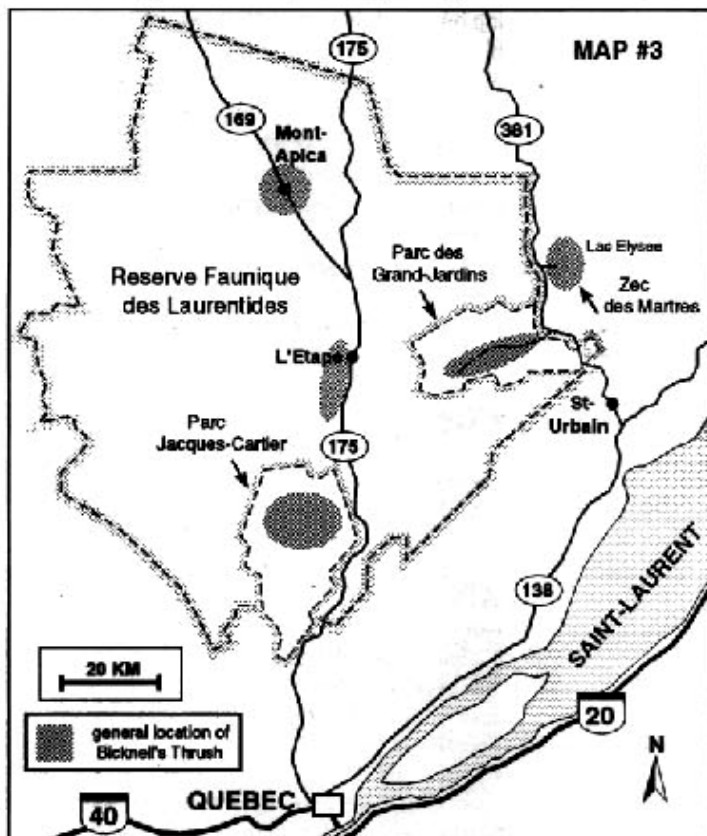
The best times of the day to hear and see Bicknell's Thrush are early morning about sunrise and late evenings just before sunset. It sings occasionally during the night and on calm and



Bicknell's Thrush by Peter Burke

foggy days. The first three weeks in June undoubtedly fall during the safest period to observe it. Patience is important because singing is often very erratic even if several pairs are holding territories. Good birding!

For more information on the Mont Mégantic site and Mont Sir-Wilfrid, see *Ontario Birds* 14(2): 85-88, August 1996.



Ornithologist Henri Ouellet spoke about Bicknell's Thrush at the very successful OFO AGM in October 1996. At the meeting, Henri agreed to provide OFO members with help finding Bicknell's Thrush in Quebec. OFO NEWS thanks Michael King for creating the accompanying maps.

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